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SUBJECT: SENATOR INHOFE'S VISIT TO NIGERIA

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: From December 3-4, Senator James Inhofe visited Nigeria, accompanied by Representatives Randy Neugebauer, Jeff Miller, and Robert Aderholt. In addition to several private meetings, the delegation visited the Senate Committee on Defense and the Army and Defense Headquarters to discuss U.S./Nigerian military cooperation. Both meetings focused heavily on how to expand training opportunities for Nigerian officers in U.S. military schools, how to secure more U.S.-donated equipment for the Nigerian armed forces, and the role of AFRICOM in African-U.S. military-to-military relations. The tone of the discussions was frank but friendly, and Post looks forward to following up with the GON on the aforementioned subjects. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) Senator James Inhofe and Congressmen Randy Neugebauer, Jeff Miller, and Robert Aderholt visited Abuja December 3-4 to conduct private meetings and engage the GON on defense-related matters. The delegation's first meeting was with the Nigerian Senate Committee on Defense and the Army to explore ways of expanding defense-related cooperation, particularly in the area of training under the aegis of the International Military and Education Training (IMET) program. Senator Inhofe noted that he was the point person on the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee for the program and encouraged greater Nigerian participation in it, in addition to a prioritization of Nigerian capacity building needs. CODEL also discussed training assistance in the maintenance and upkeep of Nigeria's C-130 aircraft and the possibility of U.S. aid in refurbishing the aging fleet, as well as the scope and purpose of AFRICOM.

13. (SBU) CODEL met with Air Vice Marshal B.G. Danbaba, Chief of Policy and Planning for Defense Headquarters and a past beneficiary of U.S.-sponsored training. Danbaba was enthusiastic about the proposition of increasing Nigerian capacity via IMET. Lamenting the Nigerian military's overall decline in professionalism under U.S. sanctions, he stated that "somewhere along the line things went very bad." He expressed gratitude for the role Nigeria's foreign partners could play in changing things for the better, and said the GON would be willing to pay for slots in U.S. military courses. DCM ticked off a list of U.S./Nigerian military cooperation success stories, including the California State National Guard Partnership program, the Regional Maritime Awareness Center radar installation in Lagos, and the scores of Nigerians who were trained in the U.S. in the past year. Senator Inhofe recounted his role in the creation of AFRICOM, and reaffirmed the benefits it could bring to Africa. The

meeting closed with Danbaba describing the upward trajectory of continental acceptance of the new command, including widespread receptivity among Africa's militaries and slow but growing receptivity among politicians.

This cable coordinated with Consulate Lagos, and cleared by CODEL Inhofe.  
Sanders